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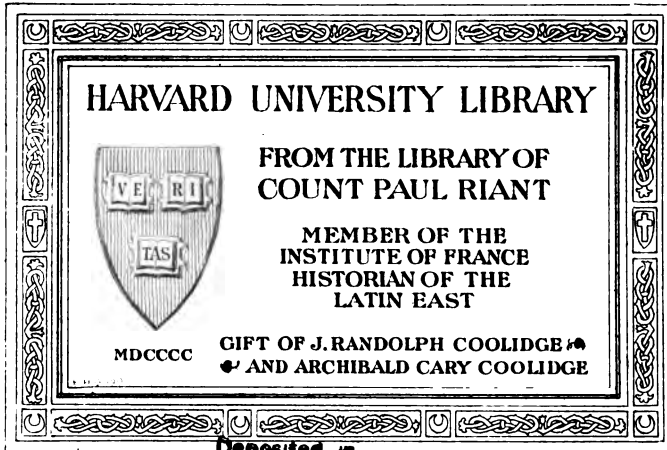
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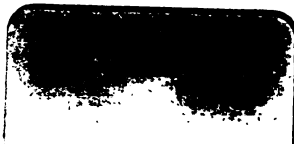
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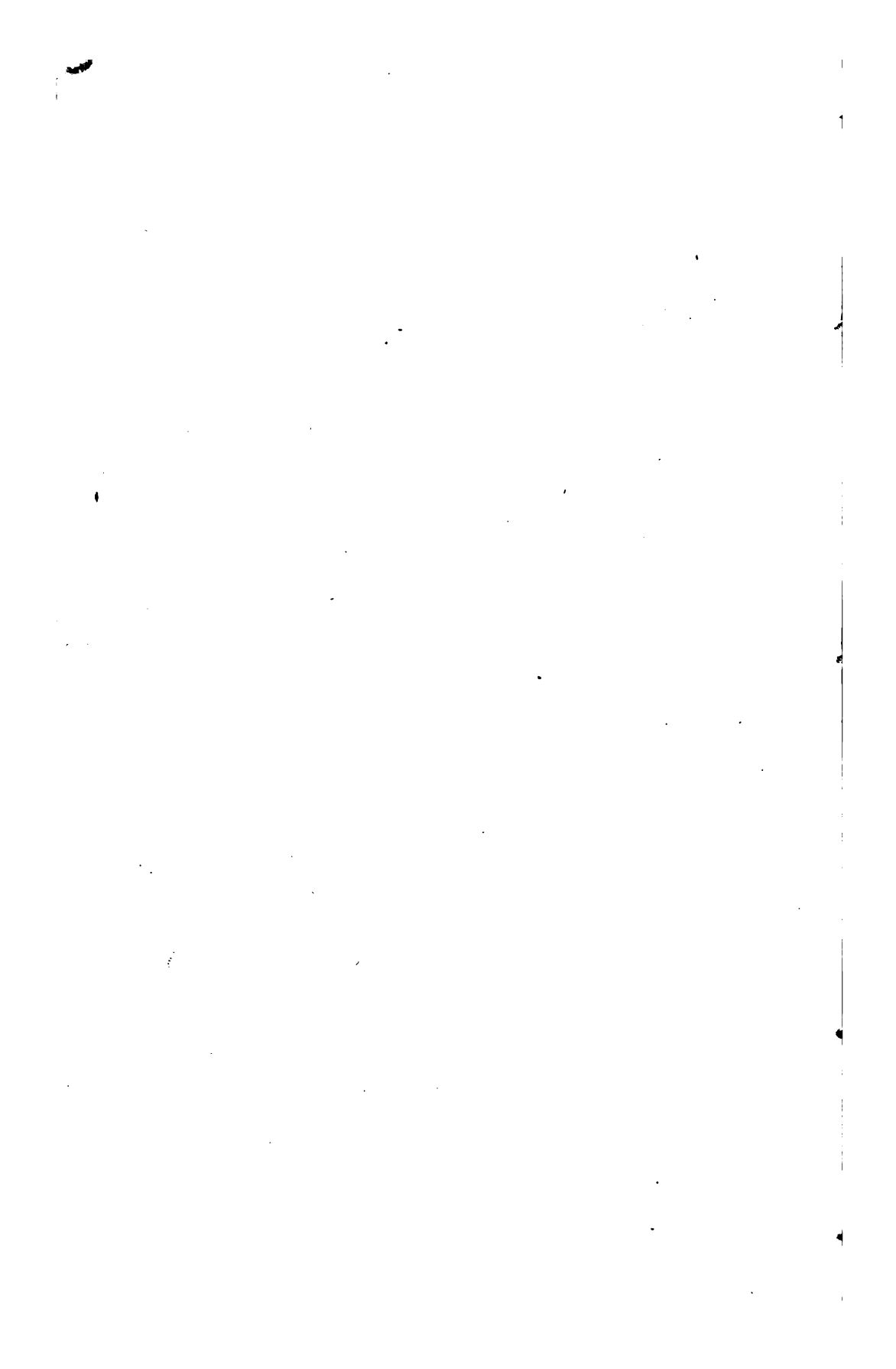
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THE PROGRESS  
OF  
BIBLICAL ARCHÆOLOGY:

AN ADDRESS  
READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL ARCHÆOLOGY,  
ON THE 21<sup>ST</sup> OF MARCH 1871.

BY  
SAMUEL BIRCH, Esq., LL.D.,  
OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

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## PROGRESS OF BIBLICAL ARCHÆOLOGY.

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THE study of Oriental literature, philology, and history, and the progress of the interpretation of inscriptions hitherto unknown, have made great strides within the last fifty years. They have so important a bearing on Biblical archæology, and such an intimate connection exists betwixt the study of Biblical literature and the advance made in the decipherment and interpretation of Egyptian, Assyrian, Phœnician, and other cognate Semitic monuments, that a time has at length come when a Society like the present is required. Its scope will be to diffuse a knowledge of the efforts that have been made by scholars in the different branches of Semitic archæology, not only in relation to Biblical subjects, but also to the wider history of those great nations of Central Asia which played so important a part in the early history of civilisation, and are so interlinked with the history and traditions of Western Europe. Hitherto our knowledge of these nations has principally been derived from the records of the sacred Scriptures, and the early Greek writers who have handed down such portions as entered into relation with their own histories. At the present day, owing to the researches and excavations which have brought to light a buried world, we are able to ascend into the remotest times of antiquity, and to examine the contemporaneous monuments of these great nations—the identical monuments made in the days of Cheops and Urukh, and to test the information they afford by what is known from the pages of the sacred Volume, and the Greek and Roman historians.

The first great stride made in this path was in Egyptian

research. Egypt was the first ancient land rediscovered in modern times; its antiquities and monuments were the first examined by scholars and men of letters. It is here necessary to recollect that philology is the handmaid of history, and that the truth of history depends on the accuracy of philological inquiries. In the decipherment of an unknown language, all depends upon the standpoint, and the care with which the induction is made. The language once interpreted, the historical results follow as a matter of course. In the success which attended the efforts of the first inquirers to interpret the hitherto occult monuments of Egypt lay the failure or success of determining the chronology and history; the struggle was over the hieroglyphy, the spoil was the solution of the historical problem. It was then discovered that the Egyptians were not only a most highly civilised and most ancient people, but that their history was of the highest importance for the study of Biblical archæology. The discoveries of Champollion proved that the conquest of the Jews by Shishak had been recorded in the temples of Thebes, and that the names of the towns subjected to his arms in Judæa had been inscribed on the walls of the great temple of Ammon. Those of the school of Champollion who have continued the research, have thrown additional light on the relations between the Jews and the Egyptians, and M. Chabas has discovered in the hieratic papyri of the Museum of Leyden, the existence of the Hebrews in Egypt in the days of Rameses II., and a subsequent notice of them under a later monarch of the same line of Ramessids on the rocks of El Hamamat. These points have an important bearing on the contested point of the period of the exode of the Hebrews. So important have been those studies of the synchronistic history of the two nations, that it will be impossible hereafter to adequately illustrate the history of the Old Testament without referring to the contemporaneous monuments of Egypt; and not alone the history, but the laws, institutions, and even turns of thought and expression, have many points of resemblance in the two nations. It is wonderful, all things considered, that the Hebrews have not taken more from Egyptian sources than they did, not that they were so much imbued with Egyptian ideas.

Assyria has been still more prolific in monuments having

historical and other information relative to the history of the Old Testament. Turning to it and the other rivals of Egypt in the most remote times, Babylonia, the cradle of Semitic civilisation, stands prominent, as highly civilised, and densely populated at a period when Egypt was still in its youthful prime. From Babylon are to be drawn important illustrations of the history of the Old Testament, and the discoveries of students and inquirers into the cuneiform have won valuable information from the evidence of the inscriptions. The brilliant discoveries of Sir H. Rawlinson, followed up by those of MM. Oppert and Menant, Mr Norris, and Mr G. Smith, have restored much of the early history of Babylonia. They have discovered the names of many ancient kings, amongst others the Chedorlaomer, or his successor, of the days of Abraham, and been able to identify many of the sites of ancient cities of Babylonia, the names of which are household words, such as Ur of the Chaldees, the birthplace of Abraham and cradle of the Hebrew race, and Erech, founded by Nimrod. Babel has of course been discovered, Borsippa, Nineveh, Calah, and other sites identified, and many of the traditions point to the diluvian and antediluvian records of the two great Semitic races. If the monuments necessary for the elucidation of the early contemporaneous history of Babylonia are scanty, such is not the case with those of Assyria, of which many historical remains, from their being composed of *terra cotta*, have survived the destructive fury of fire and sword, and the cupidity or malice of conquerors. Descending the stream of history, the oldest Assyrian historical monument, the cylinder of Tiglath Pileser, B.C. 1120, has been translated by four different scholars, and published in the transactions of the Royal Society of Literature. Subsequent to that period, and in the reign of Shalmaneser, the Jewish kings Omri, Ahab, Jehu, and the Syrian monarchs Benhadad and Hazael, are mentioned in the annals of his reign, about B.C. 850, as conquered or tributary to the empire of Assyria. Under the successor of Shalmaneser, Vulnirari, Assyria not only conquered the land of Omri, or Samaria and Edom, but extended its conquests over Syria and Damascus in the half century subsequent to the time of Shalmaneser. Under the next monarch of Assyria, Tiglath Pileser II., illustrations of the history of the Old Testament continue to increase, and mention is found

in the inscriptions of Azariah, Menahem, Pekah, Hoshea, and Rezin, king of Damascus, with whom the Assyrian monarch carried on war. All these, be it recollected, are mentioned on contemporaneous monuments, B.C. 750. We have thus important illustration of events hitherto known from other sources, which the Assyrian monuments either confirm, or on which they shed a brighter light by the details which they give of the wars from the cuneiform history and archives. As the page of history is unrolled, the annals of Sargon, about B.C. 720, record the conquest of Samaria and the capture of the city of Ashdod, mentioned by the prophet Isaiah. Some remarkable historical cylinders in the British Museum contain the annals of Sennacherib, his expedition against Jerusalem, and the events of the reign of Hezekiah, the tribute enacted by the conqueror from the king of Israel, with all the details of the troops employed for the invasion of Palestine. These events bring the contemporaneous monumental history down to the 7th century B.C.; and soon after, under the reign of his successor Esarhaddon, about B.C. 680, the Assyrian inscriptions contain an important notice of Manasseh, king of Judah. The successor of Esarhaddon was Assurbanipal the Sardanapalus of the classical writers, the greatest of the Assyrian monarchs, for his conquests extended beyond Palestine; he added Egypt to the dependencies of Assyria, and defeated the Ethiopian monarch Tirhakah. Surely these are astounding results, liberal contributions to Biblical archaeology, an ample tribute to historical truth won in the last thirty years by the genius and industry of Assyrian scholars from the monuments of Assyria. Could any thing cause the formation of such a Society as the present, these facts should do so,—dug out of the plains of Mesopotamia, rising as witnesses to corroborate or enlarge the history of Central Asia. They ought to rally round the Society all who take an interest in the comparative study of Biblical history.

To this portion of the subject belongs the end of the Assyrian empire under the last monarch Assur-ebil-ili, when the scene of history shifts once more to the monuments of the revived or second empire of Babylonia. It is much to be regretted that, although full information has been thus obtained of the general history of Assyria, which can be traced from 1120 to 630 B.C., yet up to the present moment

there is a great deficiency in the contemporary history of Babylonia as derived from the monuments. As the excavations of MM. Layard, Rassam, Loftus, and Sir H. Rawlinson exhumed the remains of the great archival library of Asshur-banipal at Kouyunjik, consisting of more than 20,000 fragments, many of which have been put together by archæologists and scholars, and give a general idea of the literature and history of Assyria; so it may be hoped that at a future period the library of Nebuchadnezzar or some other monarch of his dynasty will be recovered. Then, and not till then, will be revealed, in its full extent, the more primitive civilisation and the older annals of the Babylonians; for of this early nation there are as yet no contemporaneous annals, although there is some material for the history of Nebuchadnezzar, who comes on the scene about B.C. 604, after the fall of Nineveh. Many cylinders of that renowned monarch, whose name has passed into a household word, and is familiar to all, have indeed been found, yet notwithstanding the frequent recurrence of his name on numerous monuments, no contemporaneous annals of his reign have been discovered. Nebuchadnezzar was indeed a great religious restorer, more even than a conqueror, and his inscriptions record the endowment of temples, their repairs, his pious offerings to the gods, but no historical facts. These are still to be searched for in the plains of Mesopotamia, and the day is probably not far distant when the interest excited by these studies in this country will renew excavations similar to those already mentioned, which were formerly made with such success on the sites of the cities of ancient Assyria. That they may be continued until they evolve the whole programme of the ancient civilisation of mankind, and resolve the problem whether the civilisation of the East started from the plains of Assyria or the valley of the Nile, will be the earnest desire of every student of early history.

It is true that these results have not been obtained without difficulties. There has been some conflict between Assyrian and Jewish history, and although Assyrian scholars, dealing with the special subject of Assyria, naturally lean with favour to the information the monuments of Nineveh afford, it is by no means sure that the Assyrians, especially in speaking of foreign nations, may not have recorded errors. As the research advances, the difficulty of reconciling the chronology of

the Assyrians and the Jews will melt away before the additional monuments that may be obtained, or the more correct knowledge that may be acquired. There is nothing to alarm the exegetical critic in the slight discrepancies that always present themselves in the world's history when the same fact is differently recorded by the actors in some national struggle. For truth, the whole evidence is required, and the monuments of antiquity too often reach our hands as broken pieces of an imperfect puzzle. Is it, then, wonderful that the reconstruction should be embarrassing?

From other parts of the world may be also expected hereafter many monuments illustrative of Biblical archaeology, and of the old Semitic races. Mount Sinai has been explored. Within this last two years there has been an expedition to this all-interesting site by Captain Wilson, Mr Palmer, and the Rev. Mr Holland. They have found numerous inscriptions, and have re-investigated the sites of the mines of the Wady Magarah, the Sarabit El Khadim, and the Wady Mukatteb. These sites have an important connection with Old Testament history. The copies of inscriptions brought back by Mr Palmer have been carefully examined. The site of Magarah and the Sarabit El Khadim were discovered by Niebuhr in 1750. Since then many a scientific pilgrimage has been performed to these venerable spots. Views and drawings of the sites and monuments have been published by the late De Laborde, Lottin de Laval, M. Lepsius, Bartlett, and others, and each has recorded the principal points and features of this part of the Arabian peninsula. But the last expedition took with it that important aid, photography, and by its means the eye beholds, as in a necromantic mirror, the site and its inscriptions in their shadowy lineaments. The Wady Magarah is the most ancient mine in the world—here first the hand of man delved and plied the pick upon the rock, and traced with curious hand the blue mineral vein that traversed the mountain side. It is supposed by Egyptian scholars that the Egyptians were attracted to it in order to obtain the turquoise which runs in streaks through the primitive rocks of the locality. The Magarah was first opened by Senefru or Sephuris, a monarch of the third dynasty, whose reign may be placed somewhere above B.C. 2000. From Senefru until the time of Amenemha III. of the 12th dynasty, excavations continued

to be carried on with greater or less success in the mines of the Magarah and the neighbouring valleys. After the Wady Magarah had been abandoned in the 12th dynasty, the excavations were removed from thence to the Sarabit El Khadim. The Sarabit El Khadim commenced with the latter kings of the 12th dynasty, and was continued till Rameses IV., which is the name of the last king there found—a monarch of the 20th dynasty. The mines were then abandoned totally, and no later Pharaoh appears to have had either power or inclination to carry on the work. The exodus of the Jews is supposed to have taken place under Menephtha, and some indications of this monarch have been discovered on the site of the Sarabit El Khadim in fragments of vases and other objects in use in the temple, and bearing his name. For here was the temple of Athor, the Egyptian Aphrodite or Venus, the mistress of the Mafka or Turquoise land, and of the copper which was thence derived, and over which she presided, even to the recent days of mediæval alchemists. With the inscriptions of the Wady Magarah and the Sarabit El Khadim is interwoven the narrative of the exodus—for who was the Pharaoh of the period? may it not have taken place in a later age? Did the long procession defile along undisturbed and unheeded by the Egyptians of that site? The monuments of this spot are of the highest interest for Biblical archæology.

The inscriptions of the Wady Mokatteb have also long occupied the attention of scholars. They have been attributed to the Nabathæans, the Israelites, and other nations that traversed the valleys of Sinai. An opinion has lately gained ground, that they may be of a comparatively recent period, but although attempts, more or less successful, have been made to interpret them, a complete and exhaustive research is still required finally to decide their meaning and fix their epoch. There are other parts of the East whence the Society of Biblical Archæology may expect interesting and important materials. One of these is Palestine, whence it is much to be regretted so few, if any, monuments have been obtained, which can be referred to the days of the Jewish monarchy—most of those hitherto discovered having inscriptions which do not date anterior to the Roman Empire. M. Clermont Ganneau, to whom is due the first publication of the Moabite Stone, has, however, discovered at



Siloam *elfokani*,<sup>1</sup> at Jerusalem, an inscription in the Phœnician character, as old as the time of the kings. This is remarkable, because it is the first as yet discovered, with the exception of some obscure and doubtful marks on the foundation blocks of the Temple, supposed to be Phœnician numerals. The inscription is incised upon the walls of a rock chamber or chapel, apparently dedicated to Baal, who is mentioned on it. The discovery of this inscription by M. Ganneau will have an important bearing on the question of Hebrew palæography, and will aid to determine the date of the square Hebrew character, which has long been a subject of dispute. Some have assigned to the square character a date from the time of the Captivity, others have placed it much earlier. At all events, the inscription of Siloam shews that the vowel or Phœnician character was in use in Jerusalem itself under the Hebrew monarchy, as well as in the conterminous Phœnicia, Moabitis, and the more distant Assyria. No monument, indeed, of great antiquity, inscribed in the square character, has been found as yet older than the fifth century A.D., and the coins of the Maccabæan princes, as well as those of the revolter, Bar Chochab, are impressed with Samaritan characters. The use of the Phœnician character on signets of the Jews in the days of the monarchy, also proves the national use of the Phœnician at the remoter period.

There is another spot in this portion of the globe which is fertile in inscriptions, and that is Southern Arabia, the cradle of the Himyarites. Many inscriptions of this Semitic race on stone and bronze, from the dyke of Mareb and other places in the interior, are brought to Aden, and numerous copies have been already published by Fresnel, Osiander, Levy, Lenormant, and the British Museum. More will probably be found there. Unfortunately the date of the Himyaritic inscriptions has not been accurately determined, and more monuments are required for that purpose. If it is correct that M. Halevi, who was travelling in Southern Arabia on a mission from the French Institute, has returned to Paris with copies of 560 inscriptions taken *in situ*, dates will probably be obtained towards a more distinct knowledge of the age of these monuments. Lieutenant Prideaux, our assistant political resident in Aden, who takes a deep interest in this subject, has for-

<sup>1</sup> Siloam the upper ; the upper pool ?

warded some Himyaritic inscriptions to the Museum, and is endeavouring to procure all he can in the way of obtaining further information about these monuments. The discovery of the Moabitic inscription shews the importance of Semitic monuments which may yet be discovered on the East of Palestine, and the necessity of exploring that portion of the country. Many new and valuable inscriptions have been discovered in the Hauran, and some of these will, in all probability, throw fresh light on the philology and history of Syria and Damascus. Public events have probably alone retarded the publication of these inscriptions, copies of which have been collected by M. Waddington and the Count de Vogué. Inscriptions of a novel character have also been found in the neighbourhood of Hamath. Of these it would be premature to give any opinion, but as inquirers and travellers will obtain copies of further specimens, it will be hereafter seen if they throw any important light upon the history of that portion of the East.

Fresh discoveries continue to be made on the old fields of Egypt. Even lately, an important tablet has been found at Cairo, dated in the seventh year of Alexander Aigos, of whom it states Ptolemy to have been the Satrap. It records the dotation of the temple of Buto by the monarch, and mentions the former injury done to that temple by the usurper Xerxes, for so the Persian monarch is styled, while the legitimate king of Egypt is said to be Khabash, of whom there is no other notice except the dated coffin of one of the sacred Apis bulls in the Serapeum. Within the last few years, too, have been discovered the list of the kings of Egypt from Menes to Sethos I., inscribed on the walls of the temple of Abydos, and a similar, but less perfect list, in a tomb at Sakkarah, also giving a succession of the monarchs from the same period. Equally important, but in another sense, has been the discovery by M. Lepsius of the tablet of San, the so-called decree of Canopus, recording the honours paid by the synod of the priests to Ptolemy Euergetes I., on account of the benefits he had conferred on Egypt. This tablet, which, like the Rosetta stone, bears a triple inscription in hieroglyphic, Greek, and Demotic characters, is more important from its preservation and contents than the well-known key of Egyptian interpretation. Amongst other remarkable facts mentioned in the text, is the existence of a youth Berenice, a mere child, invested with the

attributes of royalty, and solemnly proclaimed as Queen by her parents, who prematurely died, and whose name has escaped the notice of the great historians. Still more interesting is the attempt there recorded to correct the calendar, the avowed disturbance of the wandering year having disturbed the proper time of celebrating the religious festivals. To remedy this, it was proposed (B.C. 238) to introduce the fixed years, and the leap year was accordingly instituted nearly two centuries before the correction of the calendar by Julius Cæsar, by aid of the astronomer Sosigenes.

These are only a few of the results to be expected from the study of the monuments of the great nations mentioned in the Bible. The new Society will be important to all who wish to examine the minute details of the various subjects, to perfect themselves in their knowledge, and to advance the study in which they are engaged. It deserves to be largely supported by the friends of Biblical archæology. It is to be hoped that its operations may be extended, by the publication of its papers, and other means co-ordinate with its public utility. Its scope is Archæology, not Theology, but to Theology it will prove an important aid. To all those it must be attractive who are interested in the primitive and early history of mankind; that history which is not written in books nor on paper, but upon rocks and stones deep in the soil far away in the desert; that history which is not to be found in the library or the mart, but which must be dug up in the valley of the Nile, or exhumed from the plains of Mesopotamia.









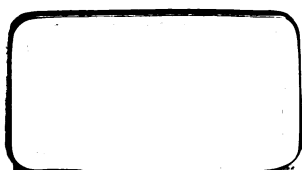








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